

December 10, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Dear Madam Secretary,

First Call for Help of Broward, Inc. (dba 2-1-1 Broward) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Broward County, Florida, is part of a metropolitan statistical area of over 6 million residents, the 7th largest in the U.S. The 211 number is well known as this community's health, human service, crisis, and suicide prevention hotline number, and the 211s in this region also answer calls to the national suicide prevention hotline through partnerships with National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. 2-1-1 Broward, like many other 211s, is accredited by the American Association of Suicidology and delivers 24-hour, multilingual services to people who are in need or in crisis. Calls are answered by degreed professionals who are skilled at managing crisis and active suicide calls. We coordinate closely with 911, mobile crisis, and nearly 1,000 service providers, assuring an immediate and appropriate response for each caller. 211 is promoted and recognized as the safe place to call, and nearly twenty years after the launch of 211, similar collaborations exist in communities throughout the nation.

We acknowledge and support the need for a simple dialing code and a safe calling space, something that the FCC recognized was important when authorizing the 211 calling number. In many communities across the country, 211 is recognized as the number for health, human services, crisis, and suicide-related help; in effect, for all services. In these communities, designating a second code for one service will be confusing. We can expect that 211 would continue to receive calls and approximately 40% of callers to another number would still need to connect with 211 for support services such as substance use, basic needs, housing, transportation, insurance, and other health and human service needs. We encourage careful consideration of whether another 3-digit code might unintentionally erode the simplicity and seamlessness that

exists with 211 and whether an investment should be made in a new network or in the existing 211 network.

As a 211 organization that has delivered crisis services since 1995, we encourage the FCC to consider the current 211 network as a vital partner and a cost-effective, efficient, and effective strategy to change the upward trend of suicide in the United States.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sheila Smith", with a stylized, cursive script.

Sheila J. Smith
President/CEO